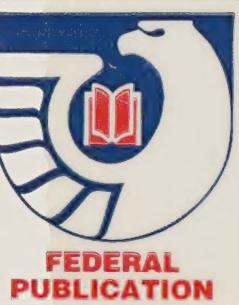


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MEDICINE CREEK ROCK ART

A WINDOW ON THE AMERICAN INDIAN PAST



Reserve
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2004



Rock art - paintings and engravings on cave and cliff walls - was made by peoples all over the world. In Oregon, American Indians made rock art during religious ceremonies. Their rock art sites are places of power that provide a window into their beliefs.

The rock paintings at Medicine Creek record the rituals of the American Indians in southwestern Oregon, people who have lived in this region for more than 8,000 years.



United States
Department
of Agriculture

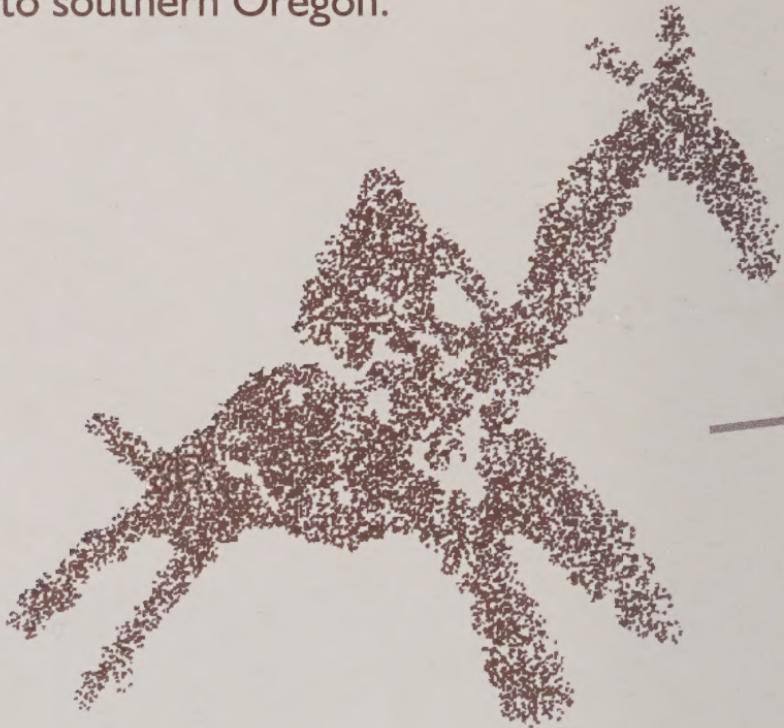


Forest Service
Pacific Northwest
Region

Umpqua
National Forest

Horse and Rider

The horse and riders painted at this site tell us that it was created sometime during the last 250 years, when horses were first brought into southern Oregon.



Human Figure

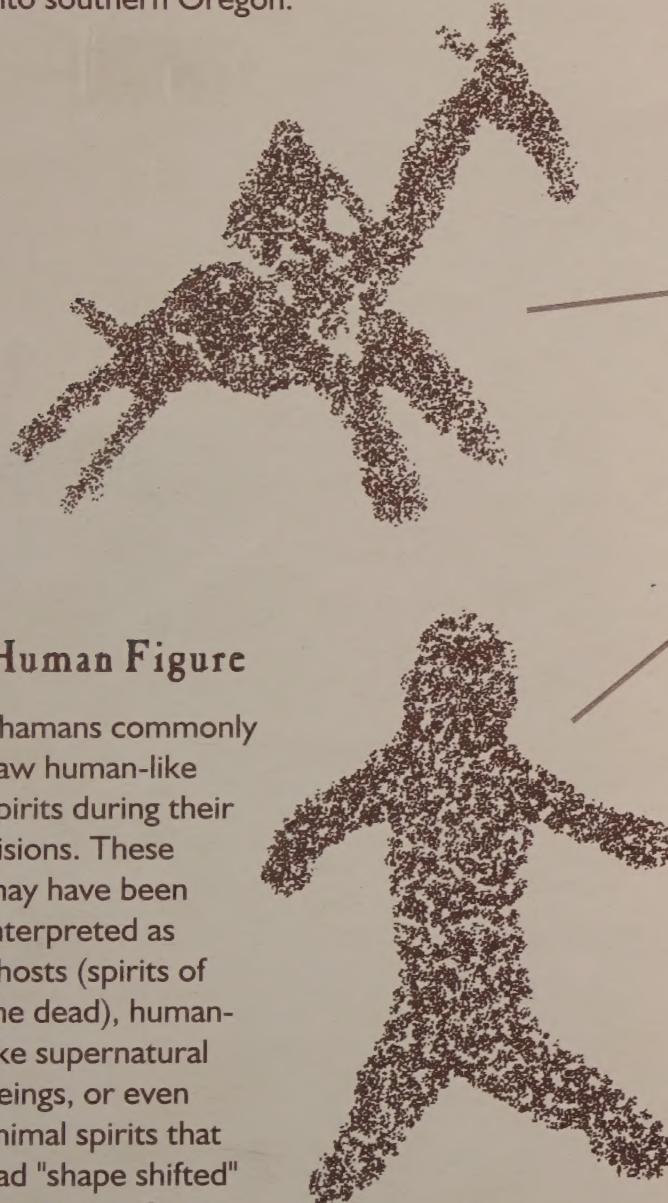
Shamans commonly saw human-like spirits during their visions. These may have been interpreted as ghosts (spirits of the dead), human-like supernatural beings, or even animal spirits that had "shape shifted" into human form. These stick-figure humans are among the most common motifs made by shamans to portray their visions.



Medicine Creek Cave: A Place of Supernatural Power

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Rock art sites are considered religious places of supernatural power. Medicine Creek most likely received its name because of the rock art site: "medicine" was often a translation for "supernatural power."



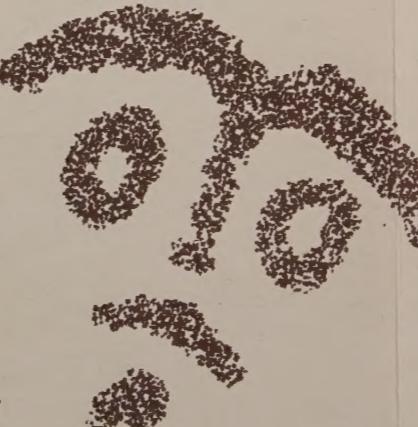
Paint from Various Pigments

The rock paintings, or pictographs, were often made with red ochre, a natural mineral earth pigment. This was mixed with oil or animal fat, and applied to the cave wall with the fingers, a frayed stick, or with a brush made from the tail of a small animal. Some paintings were also made from a dry chunk of ochre, used like a crayon or chalk.

Other figures at this site, and other sites in the region, have yellow or blue-green pictographs, made from other mineral pigments. Black paintings were most often made with charcoal.

Spirit Figure

"Mask" or "face" figures have exaggerated facial features. No two figures are alike, a notable contrast to the sameness of many other art forms. This suggests that they represent the artists highly individualized perception of their guardian spirit.



Vandalism

Vandalism, the defacing of rock art sites, destroys not only individual images but damages the entire rock art panel. Some of the chalk tracings of pictographs done over twenty years ago can still be found on this panel. Please show respect by not touching rock art anywhere.

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American Indian Life ii

A Life of Hunting and Gathering

The American Indians of southwestern Oregon were hunter-gatherers. Their food included wild plants, deer, elk, and especially salmon and trout that are common in this region. The abundance of these resources allowed American Indians to establish large and stable populations and villages. Archaeological studies show that some of the campsites in the Umpqua National Forest were occupied as many as 8,000 years ago.

A Tribal Boundary Area

The Umpqua River Basin was occupied by the Southern Molalla, Cow Creek, Yoncalla Kalapuya and Umpqua tribes. The boundaries of the tribes were much more fluid than those drawn for counties today. Although each of these groups spoke a different language, their cultures and lifeways were similar. They were organized into bands, often led by a headman, who was recognized as the wisest and sometimes oldest member of the group. Each band traveled from one location to the next in order to harvest the food resources that became available with the changing seasons.



the North Umpqua Area

Shamanism: The Foundation of the Ancient Rock Art Forms

The religion of the American Indians of the Umpqua basin was shamanism. Their beliefs centered around a shaman, a medicine man or woman, who could cure illness, foretell the future, influence the weather, control game, and sometimes even bewitch enemies. Shamans did these things by entering the supernatural world in a trance and having visions. Wild tobacco, smoked after days of fasting, was a common way that the shaman achieved a trance-like state.



The Shaman's Supernatural Visions

Rock art was made by shamans to portray the visions that they received while in the supernatural world. The paintings may show the shaman's spirit helpers, or animal spirits, that imparted supernatural power. Geometric patterns are often seen during a vision. These were often believed to represent images of supernatural power.

Sometimes a shaman even painted images of enemies they were trying to bewitch. In other parts of the west, shamans are known to have made rock art of horses and riders - pictures of Euro-Americans - to bewitch the new migrants who were taking over their lands. Southern Oregon experienced great strife during the 19th century, culminating in the Rogue River Indian Wars. Some of the paintings at Medicine Creek may have been made by a shaman hoping to influence the outcome of battles.



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Help Us Protect Our Cultural Heritage Sites

The rock art at Medicine Creek, and other sites, is very fragile and is protected by law. What has lasted for hundreds and, in some cases, thousands, of years can be destroyed in a few moments.

Please help us preserve this, and other archaeological sites, by following a few guidelines.

Show Respect

This site is important to the American Indians of this area.

Please Don't Touch

Oils from your hands contribute to the destruction of the art.

Keep Dust and Smoke Away

Dust and smoke build up on the rock and obscure the drawings.

Keep the Site Intact

Disturbing, defacing, or looting an archaeological site is against the law. These activities destroy our cultural heritage.

Please report any illegal activities you see to your local Ranger Station or call (541) 957-3462 or (541) 672-6601.

Umpqua National Forest
2900 NW Stewart Parkway
Roseburg, OR 97470

UMP-04-08